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THE LENINIST HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Since Stalin's death in March 1953, references to Lenin and Leninism have multiplied in the Soviet press and in public pronouncements of the Soviet leadership. With the downgrading of Stalin, Lenin has become the object of a new veritable "cult of the individual," and Leninism has become increasingly the body of unquestioned doctrine accepted, expounded, and propagated by Moscow.

It may be well, under these circumstances, to examine Leninism--as shown in the writings and statements of Lenin himself--so as to understand some of the salient features of what the present Soviet leadership accepts its ideological, moral, and political heritage to be.

I. Opportunism and Force--Basic Elements of Leninism

A. The Struggle: Morals, Means and Ends

The primacy of the "class struggle," as defined and interpreted by Lenin, made every other consideration subordinate. Moreover, the accepted concepts of morality and decency, not infrequently, were described as part of the superstructure growing out of the capitalist (bourgeois) economic and social system, phenomena which, therefore, had no lasting, intrinsic, respectable justification. As Lenin explained in 1921, in addressing a congress of Communist youth:

In what sense do we repudiate ethics and morality? In the sense that they were preached by the bourgeoisie who declared that ethics were God's commandments ... or they deduced them from idealistic or semi-idealistic phrases.... We repudiate all morality that is taken outside of human, class concepts ... we say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. Our morality is deduced from

the class struggle of the proletariat. We say: morality is that which serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the toilers around the proletariat.... Communist morality is the morality which serves this struggle. (SW, IX, 475-479.)

This outlook was shown by Lenin as early as 1902, when he argued that "there are historical wrongs and historical wrongs." Some deserve restitution and correction; others, on the contrary, are conducive to the creation of a crisis, of a situation in which the revolutionary proletariat, as defined by Lenin, would have a better, a more powerful position to strike a blow against its foes.

We do not justify our demand by whimpering over a historical wrong, but by insisting on the necessity ... of clearing the road for the class struggle ... We have in this case a different kind of historical wrong, a wrong which directly retards ... the class struggle. (SW, II, 315.)

The same rejection of traditional morality implied likewise a rejection of tolerance for the heterodox. As Lenin wrote, again as early as 1902, even before his own political organization had taken shape:

Is there a single drop of political sense in the demand to make the political struggle flabby for the sake of producing what your enemies call tolerance?

Lenin answered this question in the negative. (L (4), VI, 232.) The revolutionary cause must take advantage of hardships as well as of other opportunities. In 1917, for instance, Lenin felt jubilant "for the people are now very close to desperation, and victory is assured to us." (Handbook, 802.) What one said in the meanwhile was of little consequence as a matter of principle, even if it mattered much in the way of propaganda. Lenin liked to quote in the English original a favorite proverb of his: "Promises are like pie crust -- made to be broken." (Wolfe, 281.)

When the editorial staff of Iskra, the Russian Socialist organ, slipped from Lenin's control into the hands of his opponents, he was to write, in May 1904:

The old Iskra taught the verities of revolutionary struggle. The new Iskra teaches all sorts of every

day wisdom: how to yield and how to get along. The old Iskra was an organ of militant orthodoxy. The new Iskra offers us the hiccups of opportunism. (L (4), VII, 382-383.)

Epithets such as opportunism, petty bourgeois mentality, and philistinism abound in Lenin's accusations against foes and rivals who adhered to principles he saw no compunction to share. In the middle of July 1917, Lenin wrote:

It would be a deep error to think that the revolutionary proletariat is capable of refusing to support the Social-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks out of "revenge" for their action in raiding the Bolsheviks, in shooting down soldiers at the front and in disarming the workers. Such a statement of the question would mean to ascribe to the proletariat philistine conceptions of morality ("for the good of the cause" the proletariat will support not only the petty bourgeoisie but also the big bourgeoisie); second, and this is the main thing, it would mean to substitute philistine moralizing for an analysis of the political essence of the matter. ("On Slogans," CW, XXI, Part 1, 45.)

And the following year, in addressing the Moscow Party officials, Lenin reiterated his willingness tactically to cooperate with the Russian "petty bourgeoisie," so long as this was necessary: "That you are flabby we never doubted. But that we need you we do not deny." (CW, XXIII, 336.)

In the same vein there was no sanctity in formalities or treaties. During the debate on war and peace in 1918, Lenin declared:

In war never tie your hands with considerations of formality. It is ridiculous not to know the history of war, not to know that a treaty is the means of gaining strength ... the history of war shows as clearly as clear can be that the signing of a treaty after defeat is a means of gaining strength. (SW, VII 309.)

And when a few months later he was accused of failure to respect his foreign obligations, Lenin replied frankly: "Yes, of course, we are violating the treaty; we have violated it thirty or forty times." (SW, VII, 300-301.)

Under the circumstances, it was axiomatic that any means were permissible for the attainment of a goal. As early as 1899 Lenin maintained that his program "speaks of the seizure of political power, without specifying the means of that conquest, for the choice of these means depends on the future, which cannot be predicted precisely in advance." (L, (4), IV, 254.) And in 1902 he wrote in his newspapers that the "working class would not in fact be revolutionary, were it not to take advantage of every occasion to inflict a new blow upon its enemy." (L (4), VI, 138.)

In other words, any means was permissible, as he was to state in connection with the debate on the trade union question:

We must be able to withstand everything, to agree to all and every sacrifice, and even if need be to resort to various strategems, artifices, illegal methods, evasion and subterfuges, only so as to get into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work in them at all costs. (SW (1951), II, Part 2 378.)

B. War and Violence

We know that the transition from capitalism to socialism involves an extremely difficult struggle. But we are prepared ... to make a thousand attempts; and having made a thousand attempts we shall go on to the next attempt. (Speech, June 4 1918, CW, XXIII, 70.)

Lenin's insistence to fight and fight again was perpetual:

We shall act as we did in the Red Army: they may beat us a hundred times, but the hundred and first time we shall beat them all. (Speech, December 22 1920, SW, IX, 255.)

The necessity as well as the primacy of the struggle was never in doubt in Lenin's mind. A concomitant of his black-white perception, which permitted of no intermediate shadings or colors, which rejected anything but an either-or approach, was the acceptance of violence and force as inevitable, inherent in the historical process, and insuperable and legitimate at the same time. "We shall tell the radical bourgeois: you, gentlemen, chatter about the organ of popular power. Power can only be force." (L (4), X, 52.) Such force was in-

inevitably involved in the attainment of domestic and foreign objectives. In both instances, at home and abroad, the basic conflict was between communism and capitalism:

Until the final issue between capitalism and communism is decided, the state of awful war will continue. (Speech at the Third Congress of the Comintern, July 5 1921, SW, IX, 242.)

During the First World War Lenin launched the slogan of "converting the Imperialist War into Civil War" in all countries. It was in line with this slogan that he wrote:

All consistent class struggle in time of war, all mass action earnestly conducted must inevitably lead to this producing civil war. We cannot know whether in the first or in the second Imperialist War between the great nations, whether during or after it, a strong revolutionary movement will flare up. Whatever the case may be, it is our absolute duty systematically and unflinchingly to work in that particular direction. (Handbook, 683.)

The use of force was axiomatic as far as the struggle within Russia was concerned. In a pamphlet in March 1906, Lenin affirmed:

Without duress with regard to the users of duress, who have in their hands the arms and organs of power, the people cannot be freed from their enslavers. (L (4), X, 219.)

Again he reiterated on a variety of occasions: "Great questions in the life of nations are settled only by force." ("Two tactics of Social Democracy," SW, III, 126.) "It is well known that in the long run the problems of social life are decided by ... civil war." (Article, August 17 1917, CW, XXI, Part 1, 69.) "The devotees of 'consistent democracy' ... imagine that serious political questions can be decided by voting. As a matter of fact, such questions are decided by civil war." (Article, December 1919, SW, VI, 477.)

During the revolution of 1905, Lenin affirmed that both a revolutionary government and a revolutionary army weren't needed:

A revolutionary army is necessary for the military struggle and for the military guidance of the popular masses against the remnants of the military

forces of autocracy. A revolutionary army is necessary because only by force can great historical questions be solved. (L (4), VIII, 527.)

This remained his view to the end of his days, even though occasionally, for reasons of utility and propaganda, Lenin felt it necessary to deny his support of civil war -- as exemplified above -- and to insist, as he did in May 1917:

Is there anything more absurd and ridiculous than this fairytale about our "fanning civil war," when we have declared in the clearest, most formal and unequivocal language that the main burden of our work is the patient explaining of proletarian policy as opposed to petty bourgeois, defensive obsession of faith in capitalism? (Pravda, May 5 1917, CW, XX, Book 1, 251.)

The willingness to resort to means of force against the hostile government included, of course, a disregard for law and legality.

These Social-Democratic Parties ... must do away with a servile attitude towards legalism. ("Socialism and the War," Handbook, 685.)

In 1920, being in power, Lenin could advise his comrades abroad with regard to the prosecution of their work:

It is necessary immediately for all legal Communist Parties to form illegal organizations for the purpose of systematically carrying on illegal work, and of fully preparing for the moment when the bourgeoisie resorts to persecution. Illegal work is particularly necessary in the army, the navy and police ("Theses on Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International," SW, X, 172-173.)

In similar fashion the basic attitudes towards violence sanctioned the use of terror by the Soviet government once it was in power, as well as morally allowed the application of terror in the conquest of power -- regardless of whether or not under specific circumstances such application of terror was desirable or not:

We must crush them the capitalists in order to free humanity from wage-slavery; their resistance must be broken by force; it is clear that where there is sup-

pression there is also violence, there is no freedom, no democracy. ("State and Revolution," 1917, SW, VII, 81.)

As early as 1899 Lenin wrote in a project for the Party's program that

In our personal view terror is at present not a useful means of struggle. The Party, as a Party, must turn it down (until a change of circumstances which might require a change of tactics). (L (4), IV, 218.)

Again in 1901 he argued that

In principle we never declined and can never decline the use of terror. It is a military means, which may be entirely useful and even necessary at a certain moment of battle, under certain conditions of the troops and under certain circumstances. But ... in view of the absence of central revolutionary organizations and the weakness of local revolutionary organizations, ... we decidedly declare such a means of action to be untimely, inappropriate, disorganizing at the present time. (Article, May 1901, L (4), V, 7.)

That in principle his view had not changed was confirmed in a letter he wrote in October 1916:

"Killing is no murder," our old Iskra used to write about attempts at assassination: we are not at all against political murders; but ... as revolutionary tactics individual assassinations are harmful. (L (4), XXXV, 191.)

And years after he had seized power, Lenin still maintained with regard to criticism of Bolshevik failure to observe provisions in their own constitution for the Soviet Republic,

When we hear such declarations, coming from people allegedly in sympathy with us, we say, "Yes, terror by the Cheka is absolutely necessary." (Schapiro, 198.)

The use of force was equally sanctioned and accepted in regard to foreign affairs. As Lenin wrote in the spring of 1905:

Wars are inevitable so long as society is divided into classes, so long as exploitation of man by man exists. And for the destruction of this exploitation we shall not be able to do without a war There are wars that are adventurous. There are other wars ... against the enslavers of the people. Only utopians and philistines can refuse to fight such a war on principle. (L (4), VIII, 529.)

This remained an immutable conviction of Lenin, and as late as December 1920 he insisted that history "teaches us that not a single big question has been settled and not a single revolution accomplished without a series of wars." (SW, IX, 255; L (3), XXIV, 12.) The political prospect of co-existence was therefore rejected most firmly:

... the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable. (Speech at the Eighth Party Congress, March 18, 1919, SW, VIII, 33.)

Time and again Lenin tried to explain that "the peace slogan is in my judgment incorrect." He describes it as

A philistine, a preacher's slogan. The proletarian slogan must be civil war. (CW, XVIII, 75.)

To deny that war was a legitimate means is "philistine, provincial, small-state pacifism. It is un-Marxist. One must fight it." (L (4), XXXV, 155.)

Actually under many circumstances Lenin welcomed war. Just as he applauded in 1914-15 when the First World War was, in his mind, likely to increase the crises within the capitalist states, so a year earlier, in 1913, he had written to Gorky about his hopes of a Balkan war, which would precipitate revolution:

A war between Austria and Russia would be very useful for the cause of the Revolution (in all of Eastern Europe), but it is not very probable that Francis Joseph and Nicholas will give us this pleasure. (L (4), XXXV, 48.)

Lenin, and after him his various followers, including Stalin and Khrushchev, henceforth divided all wars into just and unjust conflicts.

We are opposed to imperialist wars over the division of spoils among the capitalists, but we have always considered it absurd for the revolutionary proletariat to disavow revolutionary wars that may prove necessary in the interests of socialism. (Article, April 8, 1917, CW, XX, Book 1, 85.)

C. Divide and Conquer

Theory as well as observation led Lenin to maintain that his "class enemies" were bound to differ and split among themselves, and that such differences must be taken advantage of, such splits incited and "sharpened" in the interests of his cause.

The more powerful enemy can be conquered only by exerting the utmost effort, and by necessarily, thoroughly, carefully, attentively, skillfully taking advantage of every, even the smallest, rift among the enemies, of every antagonism of interest among the bourgeoisie of various countries, and among countries, and among various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries; by taking advantage of every, even the smallest, opportunity of gaining a mass ally, even though this ally may only be temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable, or conditional. Those who do not understand this do not understand a particle of Marxism, they understand nothing of scientific modern socialism in general. (SW, X, 112.)

This injunction to take advantage of splits applied equally within one country and among different countries. In 1920, Lenin required of the Party that it

Accelerate the inevitable friction, quarrels, conflicts, the complete dissension between the Hendersons, the Lloyd Georges and the Churchills (the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries, the Kadets and Monarchists, the Bourgeoisie and the Kapp people, etc.) and select the moment of greatest conflict between all the "pillars of sacred private property" in order to defeat them all ...

and to seize power. ("Left-wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," Leites, 397.)

On an international level, "the practical task of Communist policy is ... to incite one power against the other We Communists must use one country against another." (Speech, November 26, 1920, SW, VIII, 284.)

Thus at the end of 1920, Lenin told a group of Party officials:

America ... is being more and more hated All bourgeois literature testifies to a growing hatred of America.... Thus we have before us the greatest state in the world ... which is encountering the growing enmity of the other capitalist countries. America cannot come to terms with Europe: that is a fact proved by history. (SW, VIII, 289.)

Further splits were considered axiomatic. "We must know how to take advantage of the antagonisms and contradictions existing among the imperialists. Had we not adhered to this rule, every one of us would have long ago been hanging from an aspen tree." This mandate remained valid "as long as we have not conquered the whole world, as long as, from the economic and military standpoint, we are weaker than the capitalist world." (SW, VIII, 279-280.)

When Russia found herself caught between different groups of hostile powers, Lenin repeated his formula of "dividing and conquering":

We are at present between two foes. If we are unable to defeat them both, we must know how to dispose our forces in such a way that they fall out among themselves; because as is always the case when thieves fall out, honest men come into their own. But as soon as we are strong enough to defeat capitalism as a whole, we shall immediately take it by the scruff of the neck.... (Speech, November 26, 1920, SW, VIII, 282.)

II. The Tactics of Opportunism

A. Permanence of Doctrine, Flexibility of Tactics

A key to the application of Leninism is contained in Lenin's repeated injunctions that the basic body of Marxist thought, as interpreted by Lenin, provides an infallible, immutable, complete, and scientific answer and guide to action. At the same time, it permits of complete flexibility in tactics, allowing for the use of "any" means for the attainment of the rigid, permanently defined, and inevitably successful end.

In January 1919, speaking before the Executive Committee of the Congress of Soviets, Lenin confirmed that

... we do have to retreat from our policy now and again; but from our policy as a whole we do not retreat or depart. (L CW, XXIII, 488.)

In his argument against the so-called left-wing deviation within his Party, Lenin reaffirmed that

One must combine with the greatest fidelity to the idea of Communism the capacity to enter into all necessary, practical compromises ... to make agreements. ("Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," Leites, p. 527.)

As Lenin put it on another occasion, and was cited as authority at the Twentieth Party Congress in Moscow in February 1956--

We have also learned -- at least we have to a certain extent learned -- another art essential in the revolution: flexibility, the ability to change our tactics sharply and rapidly, bearing in mind changed objective conditions, choosing another path to our aim if the previous path has turned out to be inexpedient at a given period. (L (3), XXVII, 29.)

This notion was deeply imbedded in Lenin's entire approach. As early as 1897, in exile, Lenin wrote in discussing the "Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats,"

No practical alliances with other factions of revolutionaries can or may lead to compromises or concessions in theory, in program, in our banner

One must resist all and any attempts to connect the young labor movement in Russia with any less specific doctrine. (L (4), II, 307.)

In August 1917, after declaring his intention to make a revolutionary coup, Lenin wrote "On Compromises:"

The task of a truly revolutionary party is not to declare the impossible renunciation of all compromises, but to be able through all compromises, as far as they are unavoidable, to remain true to its principles, to its class, to its revolutionary tasks, to its cause of preparing the revolution and educating the masses of the people for victory in the revolution. (CW, XXI, Part 1, 152.)

B. Strategy and Tactics

It is important to distinguish between the long-range and permanent goals and principles, as outlined and repeatedly elaborated by Lenin, and the frequent changes in political tactics, ranging from major tactical reversals to minor propagandistic switches, on his part. Not only did Lenin himself insist on the permissibility of such inconsistencies, but he insisted on their constant necessity. It was a constant element in his writing to insist that his Party must not

tie its hands, restrict its activities by any plan invented in advance or by any single means of political struggle. It recognizes all means of struggle, provided they correspond to the available forces of the Party and provide an opportunity to reach the maximum results under the given circumstances. (Article, 1900, L (4), IV, 346.)

In 1902, in his book, What To Do, he concluded that only a rigid Party organization, as he was advocating it,

will assure the flexibility necessary for a Social-Democratic combat organization, that is, the ability immediately to adjust to the most varied and rapidly changing conditions of struggle. (L (4), V, 480.)

In 1914, Lenin reiterated more generally: "Marxist tactics consist in connecting different methods of struggle, in skillfully shifting from one to the other...." (L (3), XVII, 304.) And another time Lenin insisted publicly that: "... the tactics

of Social-Democracy ... must be calculated with reference to various paths, for all possible situations: both for the case of a 'quick break' and for the case of a 'relatively immobile situation.' (L (4), XVI, 132.)

Flexibility, he stressed, implied the Party's emancipation from the need to be consistent in tactics:

We shall be called upon to make very frequent changes in our line of conduct which to the casual observer may appear strange and incomprehensible. "How is that?" he will say. "Yesterday you were making promises to the petty bourgeoisie, while today Dzerzhinsky announces that the Left Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks will be placed against the wall. What an inconsistency!" (Speech, March 18, 1919, SW, VIII, 31.)

This was entirely in keeping with his broader philosophy towards the interdependence of advance and retreat. To him, offensive and defensive moves were part of the same general development, and one had to be able rapidly to switch from one to the other, as circumstances required it. As he restated towards the end of his life,

When it was necessary ... to advance, to attack the enemy with supreme boldness, rapidity, decisiveness, we did so attack And when it appeared that the advance guard of the Revolution was threatened by the danger of becoming isolated from the mass of the people ... then we resolved unanimously and firmly to retreat Proletarian revolutions will not be able to fulfill their tasks without combining skill ... in attacking, with skill in retreating in revolutionary order. (Speech, April 2, 1922, L (3), XXVII, 271.)

This view at the end of his life showed how consistent he had remained throughout to the formula advocated at the beginning of his political career in 1899:

One must recoil in order better to jump. (L (4), II, 315.)

In substance then, any suitable switch was permissible -- in line with the earlier view that no moral restrictions must impede the successful pursuit of the political goals:

Against the advance of the predatory Germans we utilized the equally predatory counter-interests of other imperialists. We resorted to maneuvering, dodging, falling back, which are obligatory in all wars, while waiting for the moment when the international revolution finally ripens. (L (3), XXIII, 182.)

And as Lenin announced in his speech to the Secretaries of the Moscow Party organization in November 1920:

We have correctly outlined the path towards World Revolution, but this path is not straight, it goes in zigzags. We have made the Russian bourgeoisie impotent, and it will not beat us by military strength They are now experiencing disintegration in their own midst, and this strengthens us. We do not expect to beat the world bourgeoisie by military means alone (L (4), XXXI, 405.)

C. Alliances and Compromises

Given the willingness to engage in any tactics, however contrary to the long-range goals of the movement, Lenin did not hesitate to advocate, among his followers and colleagues, a policy of "utilizing" a willingness of other groups to collaborate with the Communists. Thus, the vacillations among the "petty bourgeoisie" were to be taken advantage of by the Party:

The petty bourgeois democrats ... invariably vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.... the proper tactics for the Communists are to utilize these vacillations and not to ignore them. (SW, X, 116.)

As early as 1899, Lenin had criticized a colleague for having written of "support for an alliance" with the democratic opposition to tsarism: "In my opinion, utilize is a much more accurate and appropriate term than support and alliance." (Wolfe, 122.) And after the Revolution, he reaffirmed: "One must combine with the greatest fidelity to the idea of Communism the capacity to enter into all necessary, practical compromises ... to make agreements" (Leites, 213.)

The alliances thus to be concluded were to involve no yielding of principle. Moreover, they were to be for a distinctly limited goal or time period. As Lenin wrote in 1897, Marx's Communist Manifesto had demanded the support of "pro-

gressive" classes against the reactionaries. "This support demands no compromises It is the support of an ally against a given enemy ... in order to precipitate the downfall of the common foe." In other words, the Party must "indicate the solidarity of the working class movement with these groups in these or other questions." But the Party "must make clear the temporary and conditional character of this solidarity." Any day, tomorrow, the Party "may have to stand face to face against today's allies." (L (4), II, 309-311.)

The variety of possible tasks along this line was indicated by Lenin as early as 1901:

Today we face the relatively simple task of supporting the students demonstrating on the streets of the large cities. Tomorrow perhaps we will have a more difficult question, for instance, of supporting a movement of the unemployed in a given province. The day after we will have to be on the spot in order to participate in a revolutionary fashion in a peasant uprising (L (4), V, 11.)

At all times the specific purpose of the alliance had to be kept clear. Just as in 1918, Lenin argued in favor of the necessity of "trading space for time," when concluding the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Germans, so two years later, speaking at the Congress of the Communist International, he reiterated: "concessions mean paying tribute to capitalism. But we gain time, and gaining time means gaining everything...." (SW, IX, 239.) And when in the spring of 1921, a number of domestic and foreign problems complicated the maintenance of Bolshevik rule, Lenin frankly stated his willingness to make tactical concessions and deviations from the long-range line: "We shall make every possible concession within the limit of retaining power...." (SW, IX, 242.)

A key object of such temporary alliances was the Russian peasantry, or at least its poorer and middle elements. From a long-range point of view, Lenin repeatedly stressed the necessity of educating the peasant class, of splitting its poorer from the richer elements and pitting one against the other, all the while insisting on the superior, more genuinely revolutionary mission and consciousness of the working class.

In order to abolish classes one must, first, overthrow the landlords and capitalists.... one must, second, abolish the difference between workers and peasants, one must make them all workers This

task is incomparably more difficult and will of necessity be a protracted one.... The proletariat must separate, demarcate the peasant toiler from the peasant owner, the peasant worker from the peasant huckster, the peasant who labors from the peasant who profiteers. In this demarcation lies the whole essence of socialism. ("Economics and Politics," 1919, SW, VIII, 8-9.)

In 1918, Lenin insisted that "every intelligent socialist will agree that socialism cannot be imposed upon the peasantry by force and that we can rely only upon the force of example and on the masses of peasants assimilating living experience." (SW, VII, 268.) However, he made clear the necessity of applying duress, if need be, for the maintenance of the unilaterally imposed "alliance" with the poorer peasantry:

This is the only principle by which we are guided.... We are helping the peasants because without an alliance with them the political power of the proletariat is impossible, its preservation is inconceivable. It was precisely this consideration of expediency and not that of fair distribution that was decisive for us. We are assisting the peasants because it is absolutely necessary to do so in order that we may retain political power. The supreme principle of the dictatorship is the maintenance of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in order that the former may retain ... its political power. (Speech, July 5, 1921, SW, IX, 235-237.)

In 1905, Lenin was willing to engage in "a temporary agreement with the Social-Revolutionaries, and hence also with the Liberals." (L (4), VII, 305.) In 1917-18, he was again prepared to have the Left Social-Revolutionaries on his side.

At other times, however, Lenin was frank in explaining that the "parliamentary" parties, and later his former colleagues and partners, non-Communist Socialists, were a greater danger to his cause than right-wingers and reactionaries. As early as 1906 he explained:

The parties of the parliamentary opposition are perhaps more dangerous and harmful than the overtly and fully reactionary parties: this situation can seem paradoxical only to him who is unable to reason dialectically.... Frank anti-parliamentarianism on the right is harmless. It is doomed to fail.

The only means of maintaining autocracy is "constitutional autocracy," the formation and the spread of constitutional illusions. ("The Victory of the Kadets and the Tasks of a Labor Party," L (4), X, 207.)

The alliances have to be made depending upon the circumstances of the moment. However unpalatable a given deal might have been, necessity dictated its support. In 1918 Lenin recalled his negotiations with the Allies earlier in that year:

When in February 1918, the Germans ... led their troops against immobilized Russia ... I did not hesitate in the least to enter into a "compromise" with French monarchists. ... The French monarchists and I shook hands, knowing that each of us would willingly have hanged his "partner." For a time, our interests coincided. (CW, XXIII, 196.)

III. Rejection and Betrayal of Democratic Processes

A. Revolution and Evolution

It follows with iron logic from the premise that the state is a tool of the exploiting class--the capitalists--that the exploited masses can wrest control of power, of the state machinery, and effect their emancipation only by violent means. Lenin liked to quote approvingly Marx's statement that "revolutions are the locomotive of history." (L (4), IX, 93.) As far back as 1906 Lenin insisted on perseverance on the revolutionary path:

The Marxist is the last to leave the path of the directly revolutionary struggle. He leaves this path only when all possibilities have been exhausted, when there is not even a trace of hope for the shorter path, then the appeal to prepare mass strikes and insurrections manifestly has lost all basis. (L (3), X, 186.)

This view of revolution as a shortcut to power, more direct and less cumbersome than other, more "legitimate" means, persists in Lenin's view thereafter. Early in 1917, when about to leave Switzerland to return to Russia, he wrote:

Marx teaches us, on the basis of the experience of the Commune of 1871, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of a ready-made state machinery and make it serve its own purposes." The proletariat must smash this machine (the army, the police, the bureaucracy). (CW, XX, Book 1, 80.)

At the same time, "the idea of the possibility of a so-called democratic peace without a series of revolutions is deeply erroneous." (CW, XVIII, 149.) And in general "the replacement of the bourgeois by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution." (SR, 20.) As for the seizure of power,

The people have a right and duty to decide such questions not by voting but by force The main thing is to seize power not against the Soviets, but for them; the political objects would be clarified after the seizure." (Schapiro, 64.)

B. Evolution and Reform

It follows from the acceptance of means of violence as both inevitable and more expedient, that a devotion to, or restriction to, gradual and legal processes was rejected by Lenin as "opportunist," "petty bourgeois," or "philistine." Implicit in this approach is a rejection of "reformism" and of regular democratic political processes:

The devotees of "consistent democracy" ... imagine that serious political questions can be decided by voting. As a matter of fact, such questions are decided by civil war (Article, December 1919, SW, VI, 477.)

Part and parcel of this view was the rejection of equality as an "inalienable" concept, a rejection buttressed by the view of the Communist Party as the vanguard of the working class.

Bourgeois democracy because of its very nature usually presents the question of equality, including the question of national equality, in an abstract or formal manner. In the guise of equality of persons generally, the bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal or juridical equality between the property owner and the proletarian, between the exploiter and the exploited, and thereby greatly deceives the oppressed classes. The bourgeoisie transforms the idea of equality which is itself a reflection of commodity production relations into a weapon in the struggle against the abolition of classes on the plea of alleged absolute equality between individuals. The real meaning of the demand for equality lies exclusively in the demand for the abolition of classes. ("Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions," June 1920, SW, X, 231-232.)

As Lenin reiterated on another occasion,

We want to abolish classes, and in that respect we are in favor of equality. But the claim that we want to make all men equal to each other is an empty phrase and a stupid invention of the intellectual. ("On deceiving the people with slogans of liberty and equality," L (3), XXIV, 293-294.)

As early as 1901 Lenin refused a clear-cut endorsement of the promotion of reform to alleviate the "evils" of capitalist society. He insisted then, as he was to insist repeatedly thereafter, that under certain circumstances such reforms might only delay the development of the inevitable crisis, which was a necessary prerequisite for the victory of his cause. Thus he argued:

Revolutionaries will never refuse to fight for reforms, for the seizure of even a tiny and individual enemy position, provided this position strengthens their pressure on the enemy and facilitates total victory. But they will never forget that there are situations when the enemy yields a position willingly in order to split the attackers and so more easily defeat them.
(L (4), V, 59.)

Again in 1903, arguing against Peter Struve, Lenin insisted that his opponent had

Lost the ability to understand the dual character of reforms and their importance as a means of strengthening the position of the rulers Reforms can prevent reaction
(L (4), VI, 322.)

The rejection of reformism and gradualism obtained even after the problem had been solved for Russia itself. In formulating his theses on the task of the Communist International, Lenin wrote in July 1920:

The very thought about the capitalists' willingly submitting to the will of the majority of the exploited, about a reformist transition to socialism, is not only philistine narrow-mindedness but plain deceit of the workers

Only the forcible overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the confiscation of its property, the destruction of the entire bourgeois state apparatus from top to bottom -- parliament, courts, army, bureaucracy, administration, municipalities, etc. -- ... can assure the real suppression of the entire exploiting class.
(L (4), XXXI, 162-163.)

C. Voting and Democracy

Time and again Lenin was full of bitterness against those who argued kindly for "peace." During the First World War he wrote:

A "socialist" who ... delivers speeches to the government about a nice little peace resembles the clergyman who, seeing before him in the front pews the mistress of a brothel and a police officer, who are working hand in hand with each other, preaches to them ... about loving one's neighbor and keeping the Christian commandments. (CW, XIX, 317.)

In general, freedom -- or "bourgeois freedom," as Lenin ordinarily calls it -- had no permanent, transcending value:

Freedom of trade ... is just as thoroughly false -- and as much of a cover for capitalist fraud -- as the other "freedoms" proclaimed and implemented by the bourgeoisie (L (4), XXXI, 103.)

Perhaps the most explicit analysis of his view on voting is to be found in the incomplete pamphlet, State and Revolution, which he wrote in 1917, just prior to his seizure of power. He argued, in particular, against those democrats who "instill into the minds of the people the wrong idea that universal suffrage 'in the modern state' is really capable of expressing the will of the majority of the toilers and of assuring its realization." In the same text he protested that "to decide once every two years which member of the ruling class is to repress and oppress the people through parliament -- this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republic." (SR, 14, 40.)

In the summer of 1920 Lenin was to complain, in a private letter, that in other countries "the mass of illiterate and semi-literate workers and peasants participate in elections in all earnest, for they still believe in bourgeois-democratic prejudices." (L (4), XXXI, 144.) His attitude towards parliamentary democracy followed the same pattern. Arguing against the followers of Eduard Bernstein, he wrote in 1906:

They consider the parliamentary struggle not as one of the means of struggle particularly suitable at a specific historical period, but as the major and perhaps exclusive form of struggle which renders

"duress," "seizure," and "dictatorship" unnecessary. This is a vile, philistine distortion of Marxism.... (L (4), X, 223.)

Indeed, as Lenin was to write in the spring of 1917, upon returning to Russia:

A parliamentary bourgeois republic strangles and crushes the independent political life of the masses, their direct participation in the democratic office building of the state life from top to bottom. (CW, XX, Book 1, 140.)

It is also more difficult to distinguish here between his genuine views and those advocated for purposes of propaganda. Prior to the seizure of power, and especially during the early years of the century, he, as a leader of the Social-Democratic Party, accepted democracy almost by definition as a goal, albeit temporary and in its own turn but a means towards a more ultimate goal. On a theoretical level, he repeatedly developed his view that democracy is but a form of state, and that consequently along with the anticipated "withering of the state" democracy, too, would wither. In practical terms, he often equated democracy with "formal" or "bourgeois" democracy, rejecting it as shallow, phony, or meaningless. In State and Revolution he referred to Engels' view that

After the seizure of the means of production in the name of society ... the political form of the state is complete democracy. But it never enters the head of any of the opportunists who shamelessly distort Marx that when Engels speaks here of the state's "withering away," or "becoming dormant," he speaks of democracy. At first sight this seems a very strange period, but it is unintelligible only to one who has not reflected on the fact that democracy is also a state and so that, consequently, democracy will also disappear when the state disappears. The bourgeois state can only be put an end to by a revolution. (SR, 17.)

In 1917 when the question became acute, Lenin insisted that

Revolutionary democracy is good for nothing; it is nothing but a phrase. It covers up, it does not disclose, the conflicting character of class interests. A Bolshevik must open the workers' and the peasants' eyes to the existence of these conflicts, not gloss over them. (CW, XX, Book 1, 205.)

He reiterated that "democracy is a state recognizing the subordination of the minority to the majority, that is, an organization for the systematic use of violence by one class against the other, by one part of the population against another." What it amounted to was that

...under capitalism, fully consistent democracy is impossible, while under socialism all democracy withers away. (SR, 65, 68.)

When it came to the use of democratic institutions, however, Lenin had no aversions in principle. As early as 1899 he maintained that under autocracy, the working class could not secure its economic or political gains; under democratic conditions it could advance its cause:

Only with political freedom is a decisive struggle of the entire working class against the bourgeois class possible, and the ultimate end of this struggle consists in the seizure of political power by the proletariat and the organization of socialist society by it. (L (4), IV, 243-244.)

In 1917 he still maintained that

Democracy is of great importance for the working class in its struggle for freedom against the capitalists. But democracy is by no means a limit one may not overstep; it is only one of the stages in the course of development from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to communism. (SR, 82.)

In brief, "revolutionary utility is higher than formal democracy."

(Speech, January 23, 1921, L (4), XXXII, 34.)

D. Tactics Toward Democratic Institutions

The actual tactics applied with regard to democratic institutions varied. Thus, during the early years of the century, Lenin repeatedly spoke of "democratic" tasks of his movement, the need to inculcate "democratic ideas" in the masses, referring here to a struggle against the authoritarian regime, and more specifically against abuse by the police, for the right to strike, and other specific means that would advance his cause. (L (4), II, 308.) In arguing against the bourgeoisie, he repeat-

edly stressed that it "feared complete democratization of political and social life." (L (4), II, 311.) All the while his view of political freedom was really a utilitarian one. As early as 1903, he maintained that political freedom was not needed as an end in itself, but rather as a stage, as a means "for the broad, open union of all Russian workers in the struggle for a new and better society." (L (4), VI, 331.)

His tactics were diametrically different when, in 1917, he was about to seize power and when thereafter he was intent on consolidating and centralizing its authority. In April 1917, he maintained that

The word democracy is not only not scientific when applied to the Communist Party, but it has simply become a blinker placed upon the eyes of the revolutionary people.... (Handbook, 789.)

Two years later he was to state, in arguing against Kautsky, that "pure democracy, or simple democracy, ... is a perfect absurdity." (Handbook, 833.) And in 1920, in commenting on Bukharin's demand for "industrial democracy," Lenin exclaimed: "Industry is always necessary, democracy is not always necessary." (Speech, December 30, 1920, SW, IX, 12.)

The changes in tactics are well illustrated in his approach to the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions. The use of rhetoric and propaganda was amply apparent even during the earlier of these crises. Even within his own Party, he claimed to speak for the majority, labeling his opponents a minority; he claimed to speak for the proletariat, disparaging his opponents as intellectuals; he claimed to speak for the consistent revolutionaries, labeling his foes as opportunists. (e.g. L (4), VII, 350.) With regard to the participation within the revolutionary movement in the summer of 1905, he wrote:

For us revolt is not an absolute but a concrete slogan. We rejected it in 1897, we raised the problem of generally preparing for it in 1902, and we put it as a direct challenge only in 1905.

Lenin recalled that in 1848 Marx had been in favor of revolution; in 1850 he had opposed a new revolt; until 1870, Liebknecht had opposed socialist participation in the Reichstag; thereafter he had been willing to participate in it. (L (4), IX, 247.) In similar fashion Lenin was prepared to switch his view on revolt and revolution.

When in 1905, the forces agitating against autocracy were gaining momentum, and Lenin's own group was but a poor and weak faction on the fringes of the movement, he defined his tactics:

What must the immediate support of the Constitutionalists by the Proletariat amount to? Above all, in utilizing the general excitement for agitation and organization of the least affected, the most backward strata of the labor class and the peasantry The more acute the struggle becomes, the closer the moment of the decisive struggle, the more we must shift the center of gravity of our work to the organization of the workers and semi-proletarians themselves for a direct battle for freedom. (L (4), VIII, 11.)

Soon after he reaffirmed that "the coming struggle of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie against autocracy must not and cannot force the proletariat to forget the hostility and contradiction of its interest and those of the propertied classes." (L (4), VIII, 64.)

He argued against the moderate socialists in opposing participation in a struggle for a Russian parliament by maintaining that "if there is lacking a revolutionary class instinct ... the participation in the parliamentary struggle can end in parliamentary cretinism." (L (4), VIII, 271.) In April 1905, he insisted that the basic task of the Party was to "organize the proletariat for the direct struggle with autocracy by means of an armed revolt." (L (4), VIII, 341.) What followed from this shift of tactics was a refusal to participate in the Duma or any other quasi-parliamentary institutions that the regime might agree to. Any such parliament was to be boycotted.

Thus: the most energetic support of the idea of a boycott; an exposing of the right wing of bourgeoisie democracy, refusing to boycott it; the activization of the boycott and the advocacy of an armed uprising (L (4), IX, 160.)

As late as November 1905, he maintained that participation in the Duma elections was not permissible; by mid-1906 he was willing to take part in them in order to secure some seats for his supporters; the following year he again chose to abstain -- only to admit years after the Revolution that he had been wrong on the boycott of the Duma. (L (4), X, 79: XXXIII, 182.)

Significant during the same time period was his banking on the military defeat of his country in the war with Japan as a means likely to precipitate revolution.

A military collapse is inevitable, and along with it dissatisfaction, unrest, excitement will grow tenfold At that moment the proletariat must strive to head the revolt

And when Port Arthur fell to the Japanese, he wrote:

The cause of Russian freedom and the proletariat depend greatly on the military defeat of autocracy. This cause can only win from a military collapse While fighting against any war as such, we must none the less ... recognize the great revolutionary role of war. (L (4), VIII, 12, 37, 361.)

E. The Constituent Assembly

In April 1917, a month after the fall of the tsarist regime, Lenin recognized that, under the then "bourgeois" government, "Russia is now the freest of all the belligerent countries of the world" (Handbook, 785.) At first he used, as in 1905, the advocacy of a Constituent Assembly as a propaganda weapon against the political right. Just as in 1905 he had raised the demand for "the calling of deputies from all citizens without exception for the convening of a constituent assembly," (L (4), VIII, 317.), so again in April 1917, he told his followers:

I would be glad to see the Constituent Assembly convoked tomorrow, but to believe that Guchkov [a leader of the early Provisional Government] will convoke the Constituent Assembly is naive. All this talk about forcing the Provisional Government to convoke the Constituent Assembly is pure prattle, wholesale deception The Soviet is the only government that can convoke the Assembly. (CW, XX, Book 1, 100.)

Soon after, Lenin was to argue against those who accused him of seeking to use forcible means:

To become a power, the class-conscious workers must win the majority over to their side. So long as no violence is committed against the masses, there is no other road to power. We are not Blanquists, we are not for the seizure of power by a minority. (CW, XX, Book 1, 117.)

Before long, however, Lenin had changed his mind and was eager to take advantage of a "revolutionary opportunity." Now his argument was quite distinct. A Constituent Assembly had been called, and elections were to be held in the entire country in November 1917. Now, writing to his Central Committee, just prior to the seizure of power by his group, he declared:

It would be a disaster or formalism to wait for the uncertain voting of November 7th. The people have a right and a duty to decide such questions not by voting but by force (Handbook, 808-809.)

When, after the successful seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, the elections to the Constituent Assembly were still held (Lenin's Party being in control of but a small part of the country), Lenin decided to disperse the Assembly, whose majority was clearly hostile to him. In a draft of a decree on the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, he wrote:

To relinquish at this stage any particle of the power of the soviets, the Soviet Republic won by the people, for the sake of bourgeois parliamentarism ... would mean the complete collapse of the October Revolution. (SW, VI, 461.)

Clearly the preservation of his power had priority over obedience to the mandate of the electorate. The following year he was to reiterate his stand in a broader framework, arguing against Western European socialist critics:

And in the face of this condition of things, at the time of a most desperate war, when history is placing on the order of the day the question of the life and death of age-long privileges -- at this time to talk about a majority and minority, about a democracy, about the superfluity of the dictatorship, about equality between exploiter and exploited -- what bottomless stupidity and philistinism are needed to do it! (Handbook, 836.)

Now he could argue, recalling the Russian experience with the Constituent Assembly, that

Participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet Republic, and even after that victory, not only does no harm to the revolutionary proletariat, but actually makes it easier for it to prove to

the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be dispersed; it facilitates the success in dispersing them, and it facilitates the process whereby bourgeois parliamentarism becomes politically obsolete. (SW, X, 101.)

And finally, in March 1921, with his own regime in the saddle for years, though recently challenged by demands for democratization, Lenin reiterated:

The class which took political power into its hands did so knowing it took power single-handed. This is a part of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat. This concept has meaning only when the single class knows that it alone takes political power into its hands, and does not deceive either itself or others by fine speeches about "popular, generally elected, popularly-sanctified" authority. (Speech, March 27, 1921, SW, IX, 137.)

IV. The Party is All

A. Party organization and Discipline

The inevitability of the struggle, its anticipated violent character, the rejection of the principle of voting and control by the rank-and-file membership from below, the need for sudden and violent shifts of tactics and zigzags -- all this imposed a necessity for a rigidly organized, highly disciplined, obedient Party organization. Time and again Lenin used analogies between his Party and military institutions, with a small headquarters of commanding generals, and a mass that must be trained, indoctrinated, armed and prepared for the inevitable battles ahead. The concept of a disciplined, elitist, hierarchical party was in his mind as far back as 1897, when he wrote:

The struggle with the government is impossible without increasing and developing revolutionary discipline, organization, and "conspiracy." It demands above all specialization of individual circles and persons, mastering various functions of work, and leaving the uniting role to the numerically most insignificant central nucleus. (L (4), II, 325.)

Again in 1899 he urged that "the improvement of the revolutionary organization and discipline, the perfection of conspiratorial techniques, are essential and urgent ... in order to wage a systematic battle against the government, we must perfect the revolutionary organization, the discipline, and the techniques of conspiracy." (L (4), IV, 201-204.)

The problem became more serious when severe disagreements within his Party arose. In 1900, already, Lenin insisted that some splits were useful if the result was a more homogeneous organization. "Before uniting, and in order to do so, we must first decisively and firmly split" (L (4), IV, 328-329.) In 1902, he replied to those colleagues of his who demanded greater freedom of criticism within the organization -- demands which he called a cloak for "naive" and "demagogic" elements:

A freedom of criticism is a freedom of opportunism within Social-Democracy, the freedom to convert it into a reformist democratic party Freedom is a great word, but under the banner of freedom all sorts of robbers' wars have been fought, and under

the banner of freedom of labor, workers have been robbed. ("What to Do?" 1902, L (4), V, 328.)

Increasingly his stress was on central direction and elitist leadership:

Not one revolutionary movement can be stable and maintain control without organized leadership Only a centralized combat organization ... is capable of converting the movement from an unthinking one into one promising success "Broad democracy" in the Party organization, under conditions of autocracy, under the rule of tsarist policemen is merely an empty and harmful toy. (L (4), V, 433, 445, 447.)

As Lenin affirmed on another occasion, "the organization principle of revolutionary Social-Democracy strives to go from the top downward, it defends the enlargement of the rights and plenary powers of the central body against the parts." (Wolfe, 259.) Here was a stark expression of distrust in democracy, faith in hierarchy. It was confirmed in the years thereafter in a number of instances -- except when, in 1903, Lenin momentarily found himself in the minority of his Party. Then, as a matter of transitory tactics, Lenin argued that a minority should not be barred; "everything possible must be made ... to offer the various factions freedom to express themselves." (L (4), VII, 98-99.)

During the following years he kept stressing that "in the theoretical and practical direction of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, the greatest possible centralization is necessary." (L (4), VI, 221.) And the demand of various national parties for separate organizations and autonomy was refuted as "absurd," as defeating the need for central guidance and coordination. (e.g., L (4), VI, 299.)

The same attitude towards authority at the top and complete direction from a small center sanctioned the practice which became known as the "purge," originally conceived as an attempt to review Party membership to eliminate "dangerous" elements.

The Communist Parties of all countries in which the Communists are carrying on the work legally must periodically purge (reregister) the membership of the party organization so that the Party may be systematically purged of petty bourgeois

elements which inevitably attach themselves to it. ("Conditions of Affiliation to the Communist International," 1920, SW, X, 204.)

Once a split had occurred within the Party, it was perfectly defensible and necessary to struggle against the erstwhile colleagues:

It is wrong to write about Party comrades in a language that systematically spreads among the working masses hatred, aversion, contempt for those who hold different opinions. But one may and must write in that strain about a seceded organization. Why must one? Because when a split has taken place it is one's duty to wrest the masses from the leadership to the seceded section. The limits of the struggle based on a split are not Party limits, but general political limits, or rather general civil limits, limits set by criminal law and nothing else. (SW, III, 490-494.)

The sanction of the purge and the attack on erstwhile colleagues was thus contained in the necessity to apply terror, as explained above.

B. Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The previously stipulated acceptance of force as a legitimate and necessary means to secure the desired end, as well as the anticipated opposition of hostile elements, gave rise to the axiomatic acceptance of the necessity to establish a system which, upon the seizure of power would be able to use the requisite force to secure compliance with the dictates of the new ruler. The theoretical defense of such an order, known as the dictatorship of the proletariat, was to be found in the writings of Marx and his disciples concerning the "transitional" period after the assumption of power, until all class enemies had been eliminated or liquidated in one fashion or another. Lenin was quick to explain, as early as 1920, that "the dictatorship of the proletariat represents a necessary political condition of social revolution." (L (4), VI, 13; VI, 231.) As he proclaimed in 1906: "Power unlimited, extra-legal, relying on compulsion in the most direct sense of the word -- that is dictatorship." (L (4), X, 218.) And he repeated his definition almost word by word when, in 1918 he argued against socialist critics:

Dictatorship is power based directly upon force and unrestricted by any laws. The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is power won and maintained by the violence of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, power unrestricted by any laws. (SW, VII, 123.)

At times the broader concept of proletarian dictatorship was eliminated when the question of individual or group dictatorship arose. Thus, early in 1920, Lenin explained to the Congress of the Communist Party:

Soviet Socialist Democracy is not contradictory to individual management and dictatorship in any way; the will of a class may sometimes be carried out by a dictator, who at times may do more alone and who is frequently more necessary. (SW, VIII, 222.)

The definition of dictatorship, proudly adopted, was still the same: "The scientific concept of dictatorship means nothing more or less than unrestricted power absolutely unimpeded by laws or regulation and resting directly on force. This is the meaning of dictatorship and nothing else." (SW, VII, 254.) And at the end of the Civil War, in addressing the Congress of Soviets in December 1920, Lenin confirmed once again: "The dictatorship of the proletariat does not fear compulsion -- it does not fear sharp, decisive, merciless application of duress by the state." (L (4), XXXI, 466.)

Even in the summer of 1921, when a certain consolidation of power within the country had taken place and no foreign wars were being fought, Lenin maintained that the need for dictatorship continued to exist -- and would continue to exist until all enemies had been eliminated. From that point of view, he subscribed to the view of permanent war.

Dictatorship is the state of acute war. We are precisely in such a state. There is no military invasion at present, but ... until the final issue is decided, the state of awful war will continue. (Speech, July 5, 1921, SW, IX, 242.)

C. Party Control over Government, Trade Unions, Press

The arrogation of complete authority implied an extension of this striving for complete, "totalitarian" control after the

seizure of power to the various arms and organs of governing. Lenin rejected categorically and repeatedly the request for autonomy of groups both within the Party and within the State. "One must struggle against the chaos in ideas, against those unhealthy opposition elements within the Communist Party who renounce ... the Party's guiding role with regard to the non-Party mass." (L (4), XXXII, 32.) In addressing a Congress of Cooperatives, Lenin explicitly demanded that each group in the Soviet state "abandon the idea of independence" from the Party unless it wanted to be treated as an enemy of the Party:

You say you want independence. It seems to me that anybody who makes such a demand risks arousing distrust. If you complain of friction and want to eliminate it, you must first of all abandon the idea of independence, for anybody who holds that view ... is by that fact an opponent of the Soviet system There can be no talks, there must be no talks, of independence for individual groups. ... what this means is that everything should be subordinated to the Soviet government, and that all cooperative societies should be abandoned as quickly as possible (CW, XXIII, 440-441.)

The same was to be true of Communist Parties abroad:

The preparation for the dictatorship of the proletariat demands ... the replacement of the old leaders by communists in absolutely all forms of proletarian organization, not only in political groups but also in trade unions, cooperatives, educational, etc. organizations. (L (4), XXXI, 167.)

And in its own turn the government's machine was to be subordinated to the communist movement. As Lenin stated in November 1920:

The Party ... rules and must rule over the huge government machine. (L (4), XXXI, 344.)

The need to control and influence the military arm was recognized even prior to the Soviet assumption of power. One of the conditions for admission to the Communist International as defined in July 1920 was "the insistent and systematic propaganda and agitation in military units and the organization of communist cells in each military unit. This communist work will have to

be conducted largely illegally." (L (4), XXXI, 183.)

The same conditions specified the demand that the Party control the press:

Periodical and non-periodical press and all publishing must be completely subordinated to the Central Committee of the Party (L (4), XXXI, 185.)

Lenin argued that under the Soviet system "freedom of the press ceases to be a hypocrisy, because the printing presses and paper are taken away from the bourgeoisie." (Handbook, 829.) Likewise he insisted that Party control contributed to freedom of the press since it freed it from "bourgeois-anarchical individualism." (L (4), X, 29.)

The same control was to be exercised over the trade unions in Russia. As far back as 1902, Lenin maintained that it was sufficient to have a relatively small number of Party followers in the unions, who must then "directly, consciously seek to influence their comrades" within their organization. (L (4), V, 423.) This remained his view, and he was to restate it on several occasions in 1920-21, notably at the time of the formulation of admissions into the Communist International and the dispute over the role of trade unions in the Soviet Union in 1920-21. "Each Communist Party must conduct systematic propaganda and infiltration in labor unions and cooperatives," his theses for the Communist International declared in July 1920. (L (4), XXXI, 184.) And he confirmed that the "Party must more and more than ever, and in a new way, not merely in the old way, educate and direct the trade unions." ("Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder," Handbook, 858.)

D. Non-Communist Parties in the Soviet State

It followed from Lenin's entire approach that he would take advantage of "friendly" feelings among non-Communists during the initial period of weakness in order to bolster whatever support his regime could obtain. It followed with equal clarity that he would dispense with such non-Communist support and, on the contrary, turn against these non-Communists as soon as he could afford it, and as soon as the divergency of his views, goals, and tactics from theirs became a sufficiently serious concern. In practice the problem pertains to the Social-Revolutionaries, and in particular to their left-wing, which had cooperated with the Communists during the winter of 1917-18, and the Mensheviks, some of whom had remained as opposition

members of the various soviets until 1921.

During the civil war, even at a time when his regime was not yet completely consolidated, Lenin on occasion was willing to sanction determined action to weed out such individuals. As he wrote to a Party organization,

We cannot of course give you written authorization to arrest Social-Revolutionaries, but if you drive them out of Soviet organs, if you arrest them and expose them before the workers and peasants and destroy their influence among the peasantry (if they have any) you will be doing good revolutionary work, and we in the center ... will only praise you for it. (L (3), XXIII, 560-561.)

In 1920, when foreign socialists had been amply perturbed by the terror applied by the Communists against others in the country, Lenin sent a letter to the British labor movement along with a delegation that visited Russia in May of 1920:

Several members of your delegation asked me with amazement about the Red Terror, about the lack of freedom of the press, of the freedom of assembly, about our persecutions of Mensheviks and Menshevik workers, etc. I replied that the real culprits of the terror are the imperialists of Britain and her allies Besides, the freedom of the press and assembly in bourgeois democracy is the freedom of the rich men's conspiracy against the poor, the freedom of bribing the press. (L (4), XXXI, 120.)

The rather weak and irrelevant explanation thus offered was entirely abandoned by Lenin during the following year, but he had no compunctions to declare: "the place for the Mensheviks and the S-R's, both the open ones and those disguised as non-Party men, is in prison" (L (4), XXXII, 343.) And he reiterated on the same occasion:

The so-called "non-Party" people who are in fact nothing but Mensheviks and S-R's in modern, Kronstadt garb, must be carefully kept in jail -- or else shipped to Berlin (L (4), XXXII, 343.)

Early in 1922, appearing before the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party, Lenin went even further, at a time when for all intents and purposes the Mensheviks and S-R's had been suppressed as organized movements. Now he declared:

Mensheviks and S-Rs: to be shot if they show their noses.

For the public advocacy of Menshevism our revolutionary courts must pass sentence of death, otherwise they are not our courts, but God knows what. (Schapiro, 208; SW, II, 648-649.)

What it amounted to then, was the implementation of Lenin's appeal to the Tenth Party Congress: "The time has come to put an end to opposition, to put the lid on it. We have had enough opposition." (L (3), XXVI, 227-228.)

V. Nationalism and Self-Determination

A particularly vexing problem pertained to the nationality question, both within Russia and abroad. On the one hand, in line with the general drive for centralism and coordinated, highly disciplined direction, Lenin preferred, once he had obtained power, to minimize the autonomy of any constituent part, including national areas of the former tsarist empire. On the other hand, the appeal to formerly oppressed nationalities was a powerful propaganda weapon, and moreover, it lent itself to exploitation along classical lines of Marxist propaganda. The problem centered around the Leninist assumption that the nation itself was but a manifestation of the pre-socialist period of civilization, and that -- along with Marx's statement that the proletariat has no fatherland -- the concepts of nation and nationalism would wither away once the proletariat (as represented by the Communist Party) came to power. In principle, Lenin maintained, national self-determination was undesirable.

Engels does not make the mistake made, for instance, by some Marxists in dealing with the right of a nation to self-determination: that it is impossible under capitalism and will be unnecessary under socialism. (SR, 65.)

In 1903, Lenin opposed federalism as an anti-centralist device:

The proletariat must not advocate federalism and national autonomy; the proletariat must not raise such demands which inevitably amount to the demand for the creation of autonomous class states.... the demand for national autonomy is not a permanent, programmatic necessity for the proletariat. Its support of this demand can become necessary for it only in specific, exceptional circumstances. (L (4), VI, 293-294.)

The tactical flexibility exhibited in this early statement was maintained by Lenin during the following years. Upon the outbreak of the First World War, he wrote in an article on the tasks of the Socialist International:

The socialist movement cannot be victorious within the old framework of the fatherland. It creates new, higher forms of human life under which the best demands and progressive tendencies of the

laboring masses of all nationalities will be fully satisfied in an international unity, while the present national partitions are destroyed. (CW, XVIII, 87.)

One month later he was frank to reaffirm his general position:

We on our part are not unconditional advocates of small nations. Other conditions being equal, we are decidedly for centralization and against the philistine ideal of federation. (CW, XVIII, 102.)

Nothing could be more revealing of his willingness to go to considerable lengths for purposes of tactical victories. In subsequent years, after the seizure of power, federation was precisely the form which he advocated, adopted, and imposed over the opposition of several of his close associates. Actually, he had sanctioned this exception, at least so far as the Russian Empire was concerned, as early as 1913:

The right of self-determination is an exception from our general premise of centralism. This exception is absolutely necessary in view of Great Russian arch-reactionary nationalism. (Wolfe, 584.)

And in 1920, when the problem of organizing the various Soviet Republics into an integrated state was acute, Lenin wrote:

Federation is a transitional form toward complete unity of the toilers of different nations. It has already shown itself in practice to be appropriate. (L (4), XXXI, 124.)

Even here the "transitional" aspect of the basic arrangement of the Soviet state was maintained, as if to recall the divergent long-range goal of eliminating national consciousness and boundaries. In the interim, no time limit on the exploitation of national sentiment was set.

VI. Inevitability of Conflict Between the Communist and Non-Communist Worlds

A. The Dialectic: No Third Force

Implicit in the application of the operation of the Marxist dialectic is the exclusion of the middle. Phenomena tend toward the two extreme poles, the good and the bad, the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited, the just and the unjust. No permanent compromises, no lasting halfway positions, no "third force" are possible. As Lenin explained in his speech to the Party officials of Moscow in November 1920,

As long as Capitalism and Socialism exist, we cannot live in peace: in the end, one or the other will triumph-- a funeral dirge will be sung either over the Soviet Republic or over world Capitalism. ... it is the same all over: the impossibility of any middle ground -- either a White dictatorship ... or else the dictatorship of the proletariat. (SW, VIII, 297; L (4), XXXI, 341.)

The same was true in another context:

Only the two following kinds of power are possible: either the full power of the working class or the full power of the bourgeoisie. There is nothing in the middle, there is no third path. (Speech of April 3, 1919, L (2), XXIV, 213.)

And in discussing the tasks of political education, in October 1921, Lenin once again reiterated that

we must say that either those who want to cause our destruction must perish, those who we think must perish -- and in that case our Soviet Republic will live -- or the Capitalists will live and in that case the Republic will perish in an impoverished country, either those who cannot stand the pace must perish, or the whole Workers' and Peasants' Republic must perish. There is not, there cannot be any third path, nor can there be any sentimentality. (SW, IX, 266: L (4), XXXIII, 448.)

B. World Revolution

Lenin reiterated the necessity, for his own followers, to see through their own tactics as well as those of the "class

enemy." The basic belief in the inevitability of conflict led him to remark with regard to all "philistine" peace proposals:

Every "peace program" is a deception of the people and a piece of hypocrisy unless its principal object is to explain to the masses the need for a revolution, and to support, aid and develop the revolutionary struggle of the masses that is starting everywhere (ferment among the masses, protests, fraternization in the trenches, strikes, demonstrations) (SW, V, 237.)

Soon after the assumption of power he declared, urging that his supporters hold out until communist revolutions elsewhere come to their relief:

Of course, the final victory of socialism in a single country is impossible. Our unity of workers and peasants which is supporting the Soviet government is only one of the units of the great world army But it is striving for unity, and the proletariat greets every piece of information with loud cheers because it knows that in Russia the common cause is being pursued. (SW, VII, 280-281.)

In similar fashion he declared, later in 1918:

Either the Soviet government triumphs in every advanced country in the world, or the most reactionary imperialism triumphs, the most savage imperialism, which is throttling the small and feeble nationalities and reinstating reaction all over the world -- Anglo-American imperialism which has perfectly mastered the art of using the form of a democratic republic. One or the other, there is no middle course. (SW, VIII, 148-149.)

Here was the same basic black-white perception, his dialectic approach applied to international relations.

International imperialism, with all the power of its capital, with its highly organized military technology, which is the real force, the real strength of international capital, could in no case and under no conditions get on with the Soviet Republic ... could not by virtue of trade links, and international financial relations.

Here conflict is inevitable, Here lies the greatest difficulty of the Russian Revolution, its greatest historical problem: the need to solve international tasks, the need to provoke international revolution. (L (3), XXII, 317.)

Thus, the basic outlook remained the expectation of further revolutions abroad. As Lenin wrote on the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution:

The first Bolshevik Revolution tore the first one hundred million people out of the imperialist war, out of the imperialist world. The following revolutions will tear all of humanity out of such wars and such a world. (L (4), XXXIII, 35.)

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LENNIN VERSUS KHRUSHCHEV

The Leninist heritage is far more ambiguous with regard to the question of the extent to which other Communist revolutions would have to, or would be expected to, emulate the Bolshevik experience. On the one hand, Lenin affirmed that "Bolshevism is suitable as a model of tactics for all." (SW, XXIII, 386.) He stressed the "international significance of Soviet rule and of the tenets of Bolshevik theory and tactics." His various successors and disciples repeatedly referred to these statements. On the other hand, as early as 1916, he unequivocally declared that

Any attempt to apply the tactics of October-November [1917] in a single country -- this triumphant period of the revolution -- to apply them with the aid of our fantasy to the progress of events in the world revolution, is doomed to failure. (SW, VII, 299.)

And in 1920 he developed the same idea in greater detail:

As long as national and state differences exist among peoples and countries -- and these differences will continue to exist for a very long time, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world scale -- the unity of international tactics of the communist working class movement of all countries demands not the elimination of variety, not the abolition of national differences (this is a foolish dream at the present moment), but such an application of the fundamental principles of communism (Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) ~~and~~ will correctly modify these principles in certain particulars, will properly adapt them to the national and national-state differences. To investigate, study, seek out, divine, grasp that which is specifically national in the concrete manner in which each country approaches the fulfillment of the single international task, the victory over opportunism and "left" doctrinairism in the working class movement, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie,

the establishment of a Soviet Republic and a proletarian dictatorship -- this is the main task of the historical period through which all the advanced (and not only the advanced) countries are now passing. (SW, X, 135.)

Lenin was thus expressing himself in different ways at different times. Thus, Mikoyan could even cite an authoritative text from his writings, in speaking in February 1956, to the effect that "the working class would of course prefer to take power peacefully." (L (4), IV, 254.)

But it may be well to bear in mind Lenin's own caveat:

In view of the extreme complexity of social phenomena it is always easy to select any number of examples or separate data to prove any point one desires. (SW, V, 8.)

In some particulars, the actions of the present Soviet leadership are in obvious and glaring contrast with Lenin's vision of the future. The conflicts here do not pertain to principles, goals, or tactics, but rather to the realization of some of the promises which Lenin had made -- and presumably believed in -- in earlier years. This was particularly true for the promises of egalitarianism which he held out:

The narrow horizon of bourgeois rights which compels one to calculate, with the hard-heartedness of a shylock, whether he has not worked half an hour more than another, whether he is not getting less pay than another -- this narrow horizon will be left behind. There will then be no need for any exact calculation by society on the quantity of products to be distributed to each of its members; each will take freely "according to his needs." (CW, XXI, Part 2, 226.)

Equally distant from realization would seem to be his vision that "the whole of society will have become one office and one factory, with equal work and equal pay." (SR, 84.)

Nor would the continued existence of a police or secret police machinery seem to bear out his forecast that:

Once the majority of the people itself suppresses its oppressors, a "special force" for suppression is no longer necessary. In this sense the state begins to wither away. (SR, 37.)

Half a century ago Lenin demanded that "without trial the police must not have the right to jail anyone The people must itself elect civil servants." (L (4), VI, 361.) On another occasion he stressed the demand for "freedom to go from place to place."

This means that the peasants must be free to go where he pleases, to move wherever he wants to, to choose for himself the village or the town he prefers, without having to ask for permission. It means that passports must be abolished in Russia.... (SW, II, 280.)

There is no indication that the implementation of this demand is considered either possible or desirable at present. The same applies to the aim of the Party program as he formulated it in 1902, repeatedly reiterated with some variation in the following years. It amounted in substance to a demand for popular sovereignty, universal suffrage, inviolability of the person, sanctity of the home, freedom of movement and profession, the abolition of all indirect taxes, and "unlimited freedom of conscience, speech, press, assembly, strikes and unions." (L (4), VI, 14-16.) In 1905 he even deemed it possible to keep non-atheists within the Party, granting that they would be inconsistent:

Those workers who believe in God and those intellectuals who are mystics are of course inconsistent, but we shall not throw them out of the Soviet nor even from the Party.... (L (4), X, 7; X, 30.)

It seems indeed a long way from his promise, when writing on the Party program, that

Soviet power is a new type of state, in which there is no bureaucracy, no police, no standing army. (SW, VIII, 318.)

Whether or not he himself foresaw the possible direction in which his regime would develop cannot be ascertained. He did, in the last years of his life, warn against various defects, deviations, and dangers. But perhaps the most telling indictment was provided by him on an occasion when he argued with an anti-communist opponent. Replying to one who insisted that "the revolutionary government will be a Social-Democratic one ... with a Social Democratic majority," Lenin answered sharply:

This cannot be! It cannot be because a revolutionary dictatorship can endure for a time, only if it rests on the enormous majority of the people Anyone who attempts to achieve socialism by a route other than that of political democracy, will inevitably arrive at the most absurd and reactionary conclusions both economic and political. (L (4), IX, 14; Wolfe, 292.)